
what's up doc?



by Dr. Mary Livers

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Hello, Everyone:

“There’s no place like home...there’s no place like home...” I feel like Dorothy from The Wizard of Oz. While I was not whisked away by the winds of a tornado, I’ve spent a lot of time on airplanes lately. I am glad to be back in Louisiana after a long week at the ACA summer conference. Yours Truly is President-Elect of ACA, (taking over presidential duties in Feb. 2015), so I was extremely busy going from one meeting to the next. The highlight for me, was that I was asked to be a part of a town hall meeting that was taped by ACA, and will soon be posted on their website. The session was on the use of restrictive housing. My job was to talk about the use of restrictive housing in juvenile settings. The session was well attended and the feedback we got was that everybody appreciated getting this information. The conference was held in Salt Lake City about two blocks from Temple Square and the main campus of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints – aka the Mormons. Two interesting books about the Mormons are *Under the Banner of Heaven* by John Krakauer, and *The Lincoln Myth*, by Steve Berry, a fictional tale about a plot by the leaders of the Mormon Church to secede from the Union.

Chief of Operations Ellyn Toney is chair of the ACA Juvenile Corrections Committee, which now includes an impressive number of members. The committee made changes to three policies affecting juvenile corrections issues. They added language to include use of evidence based practices, providing a culture of positive youth development and language supporting PREA. The changes were accepted and will be published by ACA in the near future. Ellyn also was a panel member of a workshop sponsored by the PREA Resource Center, entitled PREA Success Stories.

It’s always good to attend the conferences, find out what’s going on and what is trending in our professional world, but it’s also great to come home. Back in the office nothing has changed in a week. It’s business as usual. Taking care of the business of the agency is what we do, and I hit the ground running with meetings and issues. Still, it’s good to be back in the saddle. Here at central office, we bid farewell to Cheryl Carter, one of our attorneys who has connected with many of you as she traveled to our offices and facilities to represent the agency in court and provide training for staff. Cheryl lives in Houma, and she has qualified to run for Houma city judge in the November election.

I’m sure you have all heard about the Ice Bucket Challenge that has gone viral throughout the country. The Ice Bucket Challenge is a social media campaign that aims to raise money and awareness to fight amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, better known as ALS or Lou Gehrig’s disease. The challenge involves people getting doused with buckets of ice and ice water on video, posting the video on social media sites, then “nominating” other people to do it. You can either accept the challenge and get doused, or make a donation to an ALS charity, or do both. So far, the ALS national organization reports they have raised over \$50 million since the challenge began in July. I hear that at least one OJJ staff member has taken the challenge – if you have done it, drop me an email and let me know. It’s a worthy cause - ALS is a terrible disease and always fatal. So funds for research are very important.

Another scourge in our communities is child abuse, and I ask you to always remembers that we are all mandatory reporters. Here in Baton Rouge this week we have had another tragic beating death of a five year old, allegedly at the hands of his own father. Even when abused children survive, they often end up in contact with the juvenile justice system and become “our” kids. We all know that many of our youth are trauma victims. So please, keep your eyes open for situations where a child may be in danger of physical or emotional abuse or neglect. Neglect can be just as traumatic as physical abuse and often is symptomatic of other issues. Remember, when we report to the authorities, we don’t have to prove the case. Law enforcement or DCFS/OFS is supposed to investigate and take it from there. Let’s try to do our part to help keep more little ones from being in the headlines as victims.

With that, I’ll close for now, with my wish for you all to enjoy a HOT and sunny weekend, with my thanks for all you do, every day and everywhere, in every office and facility, to make life better for children and families and to meet the mission.

Sincerely, “Doc” *Dr. Mary Livers*

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